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## DESIGN. (IN TWO PARTS)--PART I.

BY WALTER CRANE.



ART, like the parti-colored shield of the fable, has two sides, or fields, which—to maintain our heraldic simile—are constantly counterchanged one upon another in the Evolution of Design.

These may be broadly distinguished as:

1. Aspect.
2. Adaptation.

The first comprehending what we call pictorial work, with the impression, or the imitation, of the superficial aspects of life and nature as its chief aims; the second comprehending the province of the designer, whose object is rather to suggest than to imitate; or to express and relate by careful selection of the more permanent and typical characteristics of life and nature, or of linear forms derived from these, certain ideas of harmony and relation or of poetic thought and fancy. The object of the designer being, in short, to ornament, his aim is rather ideal beauty than literal fact.

Since the times of the unity of the arts and crafts in architecture, in the course of their differentiation, these main dis-

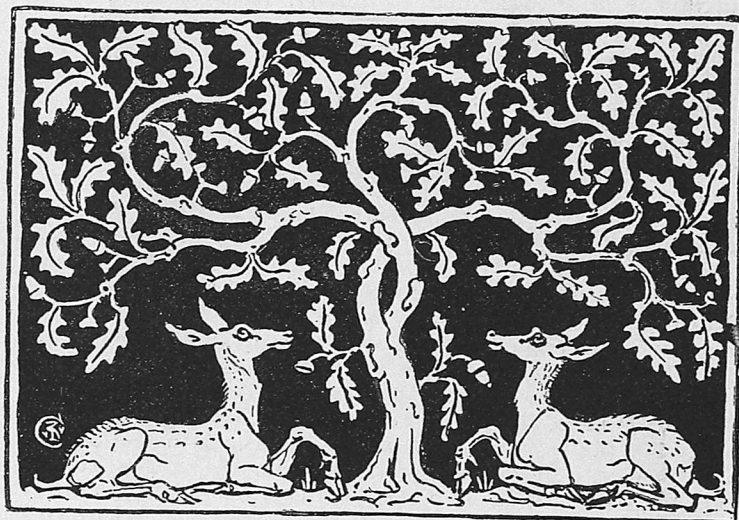


PICTORIAL OAK. DRAWN BY WALTER CRANE.

tinctions have become more and more pronounced, until we have reached a period of development in which the very widest divergences of conception, method and aim exist between one form of art and another, both in principle and practice.

While, on the one hand, we have the pictorial artist striving with photographic impartiality and fidelity to record the superficial facts, phases and characters of nature in their most unstudied and accidental conditions, with as much force but as little conscious selection and combination as possible, on the other we have the ornamental designer dealing with purely abstracy qualities of line and form, and his work strictly governed by geometric plan.

Now an easel picture, or any pictorial rendering of nature, is supposed to be complete in itself. It does not necessarily concern itself with its surroundings; and even its frame—the last relic of the connection of painting with architecture—is often only an arbitrary boundary, not to define its decorative limits, but to isolate it more completely. We might call pictorial art of this kind unrelated art—its form dependent only on the caprice and individual impressions of the painter. Anything in the nature of a decorative design, on the other hand, must be considered in relation and harmony, not only with itself, but to its surrounding conditions. The most careful selection must be exercised in the choice of form; the



OAK TREE IN DESIGN. DRAWN BY WALTER CRANE.

utmost consideration given to plan and play of counterbalancing line. The result *may* be a picture, but it *must* also be a pattern.

A poet, while using the common tongue and forms of speech, casts them in certain rhythmical shapes, and in seeking the highest form of literary expression imposes certain restraints and exercises the strictest selection.

Design, too, is a language full of richness and variety, and in the various forms of its application through the whole range of the handicrafts, by the very necessity of its adaptation to them, finds new methods for the expression of beauty, harmony, fitness, unity in variety, variety in unity—whatever we like to call it.

Now under our head *Adaptation*, there are at least three main points of view from which we may regard Design. Firstly, design in its least applied sense, as connected solely with the embodiment of ideas, and expressed by *beautiful drawing* alone—depending on qualities and conditions of line and color and values—design, in fact, on the pictorial side, less dependent on material, although always influenced by it, as in the hands of individuals different qualities are brought out. For instance the character and quality of a drawing with pen and ink will differ from one in pencil, although by the same artist; while in the designs of different masters, of different ages and countries, the greatest contrasts in spirit and methods of expression are found, even when the material is the same; as, for instance, between a drawing of Albert Durer and one by John Flaxman, whether rendered by pen or graver.



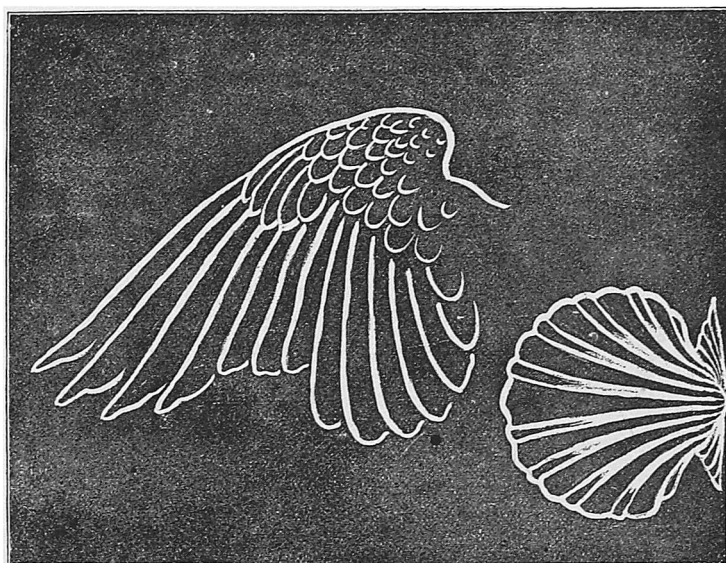
# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

So, from the very earliest methods of the draughtsman to the utmost complexities of the painter, Design must be influenced by the characteristics and facilities of the materials with which the artistic works, and must constantly vary in intellectual and poetic expression according to individual use and touch.

The second sense in which we may understand Design is as *constructive drawing*; as the plan, working drawing, or patterns, to be translated or expressed in other materials, and adapted to certain spaces or objects, and as deriving, therefore, its chief value and interest from the success with which it is adapted to such materials and such spaces or objects, over and above its own intrinsic qualities, and the measure of its beauty and invention.

The third conception of Design is as it may be expressed by means of the characteristic qualities of the different materials themselves, and as the natural outcome of those qualities, with which it is inseparably bound, as though with language. This is when designer and craftsman are one, and think and work in the material of their thought, as it follows the ductility of the metal, the crispness of the wood, the pliability of the

that what we *feel* and *know* enter as largely into art as what we *see*. Now the designer may make as many careful studies from nature as the painter, but he will look for different facts, and express them in different kind of shorthand. Take an oak tree for example—the pictorial sketcher might represent somewhat in the manner I have done on page 20, which would be his method of saying "This is an oak tree." But the designer



RADIATING CURVES SHOWN IN WING OF BIRD AND SHELL. DRAWN BY WALTER CRANE.

(while he might also make a sketch from this modern landscape point of view) could not stop here if he wanted to make a decoration of it. He would have to geometrize it, or systemize it—to make a pattern of it. In short to make it speak clearly and intelligibly in decoration. He would go to work somewhat in the way represented in the second illustration on page 20. This would be *his* manner of saying "This is an oak tree."

Now the first or pictorial method of representation involves quite as distinct a convention in its own way as the second or decorative method. In the first a species of shorthand is employed for the statement of certain external facts, uncontrolled by any ornamental intention or decorative purpose. The second emphasizes certain facts, but makes external appearance subservient to the decorative purpose.



DAISY, FROM NATURE.

DAISY, DECORATIVELY APPLIED.

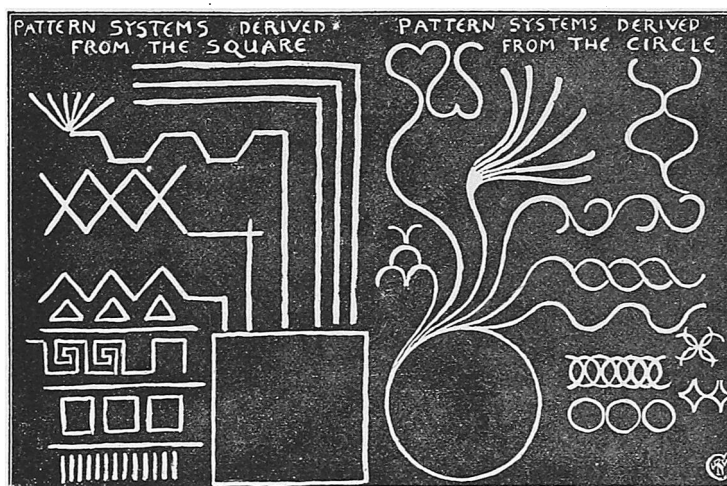
DRAWN BY WALTER CRANE.

leather, the plasticity of the clay—or whatever may be the vehicle of expression.

It is chiefly of Design in the sense of constructive drawing, as understood in the second of my three divisions, that I propose to deal; though, necessarily (since there is no hard and fast line between them), with occasional excursions into the first and third.

If it may seem that if in the matter of design I am drawing mostly on my own experience and my own illustrations, it is because I think it may be more useful to give the results of a definite personal practice, as far as it goes, than to rely on theories and assumptions about the work of others which could not possibly have the same certitude.

In these literal and photographic days one of the first questions which meets the designer is the degree of naturalism which is within his scope and purpose. There are endless ways of looking at nature. We may use our eyes alone, or we may use all our faculties and not find them too much. It is certain



DRAWN BY WALTER CRANE.

In making a book illustration, for instance, the artist may think exclusively of the scene he has to represent, without reference to what may be called the architecture of the printed page, or the mechanical conditions of its existence. The result, however admirably and brilliant as an independent work, remains unrelated to its purpose or conditions; or, he may, availing himself of these conditions, produce not only an illustration, but also a decorative design, fitted to the mechanical



conditions of the printing-press, and adding to the beauty of the book; a point brought home by Mr. Emery Walker in his admirable lecture on letter-press printing.

The designer would, moreover, have in view some particular space or shape he wanted to fill with his oak tree, and so he would control its contours with an imaginary line, curved or angular, as might best adapt itself to his decorative purpose and the method and object of the work. In adapting it to fill a panel, he might find it desirable to balance the design and add to the interest by the addition of the stags beneath the tree (see page 20), or, by repeating the device, obtain a *motif* for a diaper pattern, and by printing it on wall-paper or cotton, bring a whole deer park within the modest domicile of the landless citizen.

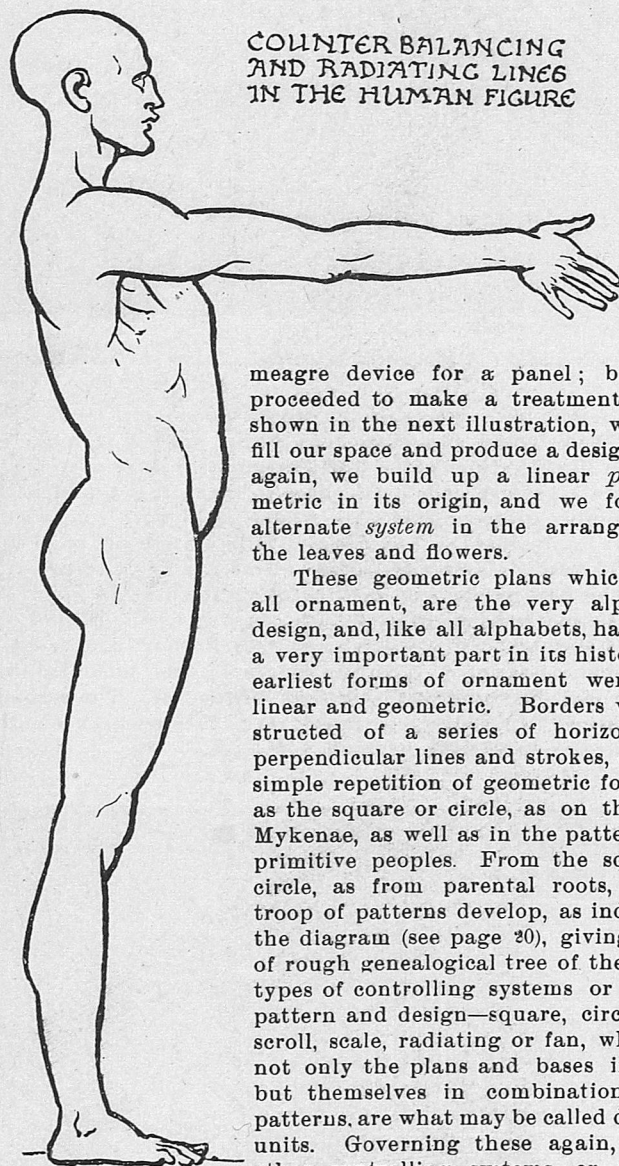
Supposing we plucked a field-daisy, and drew its portrait, as in the previous page. We should feel it made a somewhat

organic connection throughout. And where we see the principle most emphatically expressed, as in a fan, a shell, or the wing of a bird (see page 21), it conveys a sense of both organic vigor, and yet lightness, combining, in fact, the minimum of weight with the maximum of strength.

The human figure contains in its plan and the principles of its structure all the most important principles of decorative construction, besides being itself the most inspiring source and chief factor and most expressive unit in design. The outline of the figure itself, built on the firm and symmetric framework of the bones, yet expresses in its contour a series of counterbalancing curves, and we get the radiating or centering principle in the ribs, and in the set of the fingers and the toes, its whole beauty depending upon its construction.—*Magazine of Art.*

## WOODWORK AND COLOR HARMONY.

BY PAUL GROEBER.



COUNTER BALANCING  
AND RADIATING LINES  
IN THE HUMAN FIGURE

meagre device for a panel; but if we proceeded to make a treatment of it, as shown in the next illustration, we should fill our space and produce a design. Here, again, we build up a linear *plan*, geometric in its origin, and we follow the alternate *system* in the arrangement of the leaves and flowers.

These geometric plans which govern all ornament, are the very alphabet of design, and, like all alphabets, have played a very important part in its history. The earliest forms of ornament were purely linear and geometric. Borders were constructed of a series of horizontal and perpendicular lines and strokes, or by the simple repetition of geometric forms, such as the square or circle, as on the gate of Mykenae, as well as in the patterns of all primitive peoples. From the square and circle, as from parental roots, a whole troop of patterns develop, as indicated in the diagram (see page 20), giving a kind of rough genealogical tree of their primal types of controlling systems or plans of pattern and design—square, circle, spiral, scroll, scale, radiating or fan, which form not only the plans and bases in design, but themselves in combination forming patterns, are what may be called decorative units. Governing these again, we have other controlling systems, or principles in design, such as the Symmetric and the Alternate.

Under such systems of structure, or their varieties, all designs might be classed. To any wishing to pursue the subject of the value of geometric bases in designing I cannot do better than to refer them to the excellent text-books of Mr. Lewis F. Day.

Perhaps the most universally valuable in design is the radiating principle—the spring of a series of lines from a common centre, or what may be termed “local self-government” in design. We may find this principle controlling the simplest repeating border up to the highly complex figure design. Take the drapery of a figure, for instance; we may have a vast number of different centres, and our lines may diverge sharply or gradually from their common centres, but so long as these invisible centres are felt, the design gains a certain vitality and



In practical decoration, the woodwork of an apartment, either in its natural color, or slightly stained, is very often taken as a guide for the entire color scheme. The natural woods each exhibit great differences of grain, texture and color, and can be brought into harmonious association with the color of walls, ceilings, carpets and draperies, the whole forming a complete harmony in the hands of the skillful decorator. The selection of wood for the different rooms is nowadays guided by a certain amount of sentiment. For example, the drawing-room or ball room will have its woodwork in primavera or bird's eye maple, the dining-room calls for oak, just as the boudoir calls for satinwood. Mahogany is also a splendid wood for the dining-room finish, and is also used in parlors and reception rooms. For the bedrooms we have such woods as cherry, hazel wood, ash, sycamore, birch and chestnut. Walnut, cedar and amaranth are fine woods for the library finish.

In addition to the suggestions of the woodwork the color of a room greatly depends upon its architectural construction and style, its use, its dimensions, the light which it receives—whether reflections from trees, brick walls, or other surfaces—whether stained glass is to be used, and whether the hangings, portières, furniture, etc., are of a light or heavy nature.

It may be said that all the lighter harmonies of color must be delicate in tone, while for the darker and bolder harmonies they can be a great deal stronger, the design giving the key to color. In all cases experience is the best guide.

Not only is it customary to employ particular woods in the finish of particular apartments, but in practical decoration certain kinds of decorative materials are invariably associated with certain natural woods. For example, fine silk brocades are associated with primavera and maple, decorated leather, Lin-crusta, Anaglypta, Lignomur and illuminated pressed papers, as well as woven tapestry, are associated with oak. Mahogany looks well in association with velvets and plushes; cherry, being a common wood, is best associated with materials that are not quite so rich in texture, while walnut harmonizes with dull, smooth, heavy fabrics. Keeping in mind these associations—which are, after all, based upon common sense—and with a view of assisting the amateur decorator in the right use of color, the following table of harmonious colorings has been prepared for the treatment of the walls, frieze, cornice, ceiling, upholstery and drapery, the key of each scheme of coloring being found in the character of the woodwork. Supposing a series of apartments whose woodwork is of the following twenty different varieties of wood, each finished in its natural color, the problem of how to decorate the rest of the room as far as color is concerned, will be solved by the following table. No mention of any particular style is made in any case, as it is presumed that the style of ornament is already decided upon.

The following compositions are of a composite order, in which harmony of analogy and harmonies of pure and related contrasts are blended or intermingled. All large masses of the given color should be blended with either one or more tones of the same family of color, or contrasting color, allowing the given color to predominate. These composite effects are by far the more artistic.